

# **Analyzing implementation of extensive reading in ESL classrooms**

Tamanna Touhid

ID- 12103013

**Department of English and Humanities**

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**Inspiring Excellence**

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**Analyzing implementation of extensive reading in ESL classrooms**

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**Tamanna Touhid**

**ID: 12103013**

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### **Declaration**

This thesis is a representation of my original work. I have acknowledged that others' contributions are included in my research paper with due references. I declare that this dissertation has not been submitted earlier to any other institutions for an award or a degree.

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Tamanna Touhid

ID: 120103013

BRAC University

December, 2015

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## **Dedication**

The dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents whose support and encouragement always motivate me to achieve the goal of my life.

## **Abstract**

The research is based on a small-scale study that explores the present practices of extensive reading in the ESL classrooms at primary levels in Bangladesh. It focuses on the principles of extensive reading and investigates to what extent the principles are followed in ESL classrooms. It also tries to find out the difficulties of the teachers to implement successful extensive reading programmes in our country. Furthermore, the teachers' attitude and the challenges are also taken into consideration. Interview questions and classroom observation checklist are used as the instruments for data collection. From the findings, it is identified that the principles of extensive reading are not implemented properly. The teachers acknowledge the benefits of extensive reading though certain challenges are encountered in implementing the programme. The study suggests that awareness among the teachers, school authorities as well as the education board need to be raised in the promotion of extensive reading among the learners.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Reading skills are vital for a second language learner to acquire a foreign language successfully. The goal of a good reader is to be able to understand more complex text without facing difficulties. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), the rate of language acquisition will increase if the learners expose extensively to comprehensible written text. A linguistically comprehensible reading text can be a standard model of writing, introducing new topics and teaching language issues such as grammar and vocabulary. Yildirim (2014) noted that nowadays, people are more attracted to enjoy their pass time through internet browsing, computer games or watching movies than spending time on reading books. Thus, teaching a foreign language becomes a challenging task for the teachers. They have to find attractive ways to motivate learners to learn a foreign language (Archer, 2012). However, many people consider reading as their favorite free time activity. At schools, teachers are taught students careful reading with short difficult text which requires complete and detail understanding. This approach often creates students' negative attitude towards reading in a foreign language (Yildirim, 2014).

According to Haider and Akhter (2012) the method of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) follows two key approaches to teach reading: Intensive and Extensive reading. Richards and Renandya (2002) addressed that Intensive reading refers to read a few number of books carefully to obtain detail information while extensive reading requires to read a large amount of books for general understanding. Haider and Akhter (2012) addressed that in developing countries, second language curriculum put more emphasised on intensive reading ignoring the

approach of extensive reading. Though the approach of intensive reading is effective for learning a second language, it does not motivate learners to read for pleasure. In intensive reading, students focus more on analysing short and difficult text along with the teachers. Teachers believe that through the approach of intensive reading students will get to know the detail meaning of a text, develop their vocabulary, reading skills and also grammatical knowledge. In this regard, Day and Bamford argued that intensive reading may produce all the skills to be a good reader but it fails to create a skilled reader (as cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002). However, the approach of extensive reading encourages learners to read for general understanding, information, pleasure and enjoyment (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012).

The practice of extensive reading is not popular enough in Bangladesh. Certain English medium schools implement extensive reading activity as an additional course but the curriculum of Bengali medium does not mention anything explicitly about extensive reading. Haider and Akhter (2012) addressed that National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB, 1999) stated extensive reading as an optional activity. However, the document did not mention explicitly about the characteristics and the method of practicing extensive reading in classroom environment. Thus, the principles of extensive reading in Bangladeshi classrooms are not implemented as the way it should be. In 2012, National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) introduced new curriculum which did not include any extensive reading programme in the classes of Bangladesh (NCTB, 2012). However, the administration of some English version schools under the NCTB has introduced extensive reading activity with the main textbook, *English For Today*. This practice of extensive reading programme is only up to class IV.

### **1.1 Objective of the study**

The main purpose of the study is to examine the current practices of extensive reading in the primary level of Bangladeshi classrooms. In this regard, the study explores the teaching and learning method of extensive reading classes, teachers' attitudes, opinions, ideas about the present scenario of extensive reading in Bangladeshi primary classes. The researcher identifies to what extent the principles of extensive reading is implemented in the classes, the difficulties to conduct successful extensive reading classes and possible solutions to make a successful extensive reading class.

### **1.2 Central research questions**

The central research questions are the main focus area of this study. The aim of this research is to find out the possible answers of the following questions:

- To what extent the principles of extensive reading are practiced in the primary-level classes of Bangladesh?
- What are the teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of extensive reading in Bangladeshi classrooms?
- What the problems do teachers' face in conducting extensive reading classes?

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

The study may help the education board, school authorities and teachers to get an idea about the current practices of extensive reading classes in Bangladesh. At the same time, it will help to be aware of the difficulties to implement extensive reading programme as well as it provides teachers' suggestion to conduct successful extensive reading classes. In Bangladesh, the implementation of extensive reading activity is necessary to change the attitude of the readers to

read in second language. If anyone wants to know about the benefits and techniques to carry out successful extensive reading programme, the study will help him/her to take necessary steps such as what are the ways and how they will proceed to implement extensive reading approach. Therefore, findings of classroom observations and also the teachers' attitudes and perspectives are the main area of this study from where the information of conducting successful extensive reading programme will be found.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter presents the theoretical aspects of extensive reading which includes the definition of extensive reading, its characteristics, effects, materials and ways of implementing extensive reading into second language.

#### **2.1 What is Extensive reading?**

According to Day et al. (2013), Extensive Reading (ER) is an approach whose aim is to teach students' reading so that they can get pleasure from the English language. The approach of ER is based on the assumption that readers need to read in a greater extent to learn reading. Day (2002) addressed that extensive reading does not give preference on reading merely as a skill but also develops learners' personal, social and academic skills. Palmer used the term "extensive" as "abundant reading" which allows learners to read books on a regular basis (as cited in Archer, 2012, p. 174). Moreover, Jacobs and Farrell (2012) mentioned that students can learn a language well if they frequently read a large number of books. This is how their writing, speaking, listening skill would be developed and their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge would also expand. The basic feature of ER is, it allows learners to choose their own reading materials. Therefore, Nation (1997) emphasised on this feature and noted that students are required to read for overall meaning in an extensive reading program or in order to get pleasure from a text rather than finding the detailed information. However, Jacobs & Farrell (2012) mentioned that sometimes learners can select their materials with the suggestions of their friends, teachers, classmates and others. Learners are also allowed to stop reading and choose another material

within their competence level if the materials seem boring or the language is too difficult for them.

## **2.2 Intensive Reading**

Intensive reading refers to reading of a short text to get detailed information from it. According to Yildirim (2014), the approach of intensive reading is a traditional teaching method which focuses on language rather than content. Richards and Renandya (2002) noted that the goal of intensive reading is to provide students' detailed information of the text as well as to develop their reading skills and grammar knowledge. Intensive reading includes study of vocabulary with proper pronunciation, spelling, meaning and usage, study of grammar such as parts of speech, sentence structures, study of translation and memorization. He also mentioned that the materials of intensive reading are often difficult with complex grammatical structures and new vocabularies. Therefore, students can get bored or become too worried as the materials are not comprehensible to them (Coe, 1988). Wang (2011) stated that the slow and careful method of intensive reading allows students to use dictionary when they need so that they can develop better understanding of the sentences. However he claimed that the method of intensive reading is not always useful as it requires students' to read details information such as grammar and vocabularies. This habit of focusing every detail of texts may reduce students' interest in reading.

## **2.3 Principles of Extensive reading**

Researchers over decades have discussed extensive reading and its features. However, all of them proposed similar point of view while presenting its characteristics. In the book *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language*, Bamford and Day (2004) mentioned ten basic principles of extensive reading approach which are presented below.

***1. Students can choose their own materials.***

Freedom to choose the materials for reading is the fundamental feature of extensive reading approach. Day (2003) noted that it will be beneficial if students get the opportunity to choose the materials according to their own taste. On the other hand, according to Renandya & Richards (2002), this feature will be useful for only highly motivated students. The less motivated students do not want to read much though they are allowed to select their own book. Therefore, he suggested that it is possible to encourage them to read if the school library contains a variety of materials.

***2. Learners read a large amount of books.***

The approach of extensive reading believes that learners will learn to read if they get enough time and opportunity to read. According to Day (2002), in extensive reading programme, teachers establish “reading cultures” where students are encouraged to read a large amount of books. If students do not get motivated to read much, the benefits of extensive reading will not be achieved. Thus, it is essential to provide enough opportunities to “read, read and read some more” (Richards & Renandya, 2002) in order to meet the goal of an ER programme.

***3. The language of the materials should be comprehensible.***

The materials of extensive reading are written in simple language to provide the students with comprehensible input which will eventually motivate them to read (Prowse, 2002). Therefore, students will be only benefited if they read a large amount of books and the reading materials will be within the students’ competence level (Day, 2003) so that they can read without any difficulty.



***4. Reading materials should contain variety of topics and genre.***

For a successful ER programme, a wide range of topics should be available to the students so that they get to know different types of genre and different purposes of reading. It is often seen that younger students prefer to read fiction mostly but they should be exposed to nonfiction also. The availability of nonfiction as “simplified materials” is rare for young learners on topics such as law, medicine, engineering etc. (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002).

***5. Reading rate is faster.***

As reading materials for ER programme are written within the student’s competence level, students become fluent and their reading speed increases. The use of dictionary may hamper their reading fluency. Therefore, students’ are encouraged to leave the meaning of some unknown words that they come across in texts (Day, 2004).

***6. The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding.***

Intensive reading allows learner to read in detail instead of getting pleasure and overall understanding. However, according to Bamford and Day (2004), ER encourages learners to focus on general meaning of a text where hundred percent comprehensions are not required.

***7. Reading is its own reward.***

The goal of extensive reading programme is giving the opportunity to experience the joy of reading. To achieve this goal, teachers may design post reading activities to reflect the reading experience rather than setting any comprehension questions. Richards and Renandya (2002) noted that teachers may ask students to write a short book review, summary or read aloud the

most exciting parts from the text, sharing opinions regarding books or activities like role playing as post reading activities. Teachers may also encourage students to keep a diary to record information of the books they have already read.

***8. Reading is individual and silent.***

The approach of ER allows students to read in their home. Therefore, most of the reading tasks are given as homework. Students read when they wish to. Sometimes, time is allocated for silent reading in class when students can read books according to their own choice.

***9. The teacher orients and guides the students.***

It is teacher's responsibility to get familiarize students' with an extensive reading programme such as 'What is ER?', 'What are the benefits of it?' and 'How students can make a successful ER programme?' In an ideal ER programme, students do reading without the teachers' monitoring process. However, according to Renandya and Jacobs (2002), monitoring is essential especially for the most "reluctant" readers. Teachers can maintain a simple notebook to record the students' progress. They mentioned that a student-teacher seminar can also be arranged regarding students' progress and problems. Through the process of monitoring, teachers should only observe the students' progress and their level of motivation to read rather than making any evaluation of their reading.

***10. The teacher is a role model of a reader.***

To make a successful extensive reading programme, it is essential for the teachers to keep practice of reading books in order to motivate their students in the reading programme. Teachers can assign students' interesting books they have just read and may ask them to read them

silently. Sometimes teachers can read aloud their favorite portion from the popular books. This is how teachers can act as a model of a reader (Bamford and Day, 2004).

## **2.4 Effects of Extensive Reading**

According to Day et al. (2013), students learned to read only by reading other than translating, knowing grammar or following any other learning strategies. He expected that the ER approach would make the learners better readers but eventually students also learned reading strategies without studying them directly.

Many researchers have conducted research to investigate the impacts of Extensive reading on ESL learners over decades. The result of the research showed that ER could develop students reading speed, reading comprehension, vocabulary and the knowledge of grammar (Alzubi, 2014; Guo, 2012). It was also proved that students who read in a large amount could be good readers, writers and their speaking, listening abilities also developed gradually (Bamford & Day, 2004).

In an ER programme, learners read without any fear of obtaining good grade which encourages learners to read for pleasure. Haider and Akhter (2012) stated that ER involves learners to read a variety of topics and issues which indirectly expands their knowledge of different subjects. Moreover, when students see the materials are in their range, they feel confident and their level of motivation to read increases. A study by Murphy (2010) on students' attitudes towards ER showed that students were able to develop positive attitudes in reading second language at the end of the ER programme.

The importance of ER in developing learners' reading skills is highlighted by the studies of researchers over time. Alzubi (2014) conducted a study on forty one students from several

universities of Jordan and it was continued for three semesters. The study was based on the ER approach and general test. A pre-test and a post-test were administered before and after carrying out the experiment. The results showed a noticeable improvement on the students' language proficiency especially on the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension.

The primary way to develop vocabulary range is through reading. ER encourages students to read a large amount of easy materials to understand the general meaning of the text. In this way, they can develop vocabulary by reading the same patterns of words again and again (Day et al., 2013). Pazhakh & Soltani (2010) administered a study to see the effectiveness of ER on vocabulary knowledge. Two groups of 40 upper intermediate and 40 lower intermediate students were selected through a proficiency test from six language institutes. Participants were divided into two groups: experimental and control group, each of which consisted of 20 students. Reading materials for each group were equal but experimental group read five extra short stories as an additional task for ten weeks. At the end of the experiment, a vocabulary recognition test was held which showed that the knowledge of vocabulary had increased to each level of experimental group.

Students also develop their writing ability by reading extensively. Mansour and Shorman (2014) examined the effects of ER approach on the students' writing skills. He selected 48 students from King Suad University and divided them into experimental and control group. Experimental group had four classes of 50 minutes on Extensive reading in a week for two months but control group was not exposed to any Extensive Reading class. The course was designed in a way that the students could improve their both reading and writing ability in order to be a good writer. A written exam between the experimental and control group was conducted where they were asked to write an essay before and after the experiment. Result of the

experiment indicated that the experimental group had developed their writing ability than the control group at the end of the programme.

Research on ER is not available in the context of Bangladesh. Recently, Haider and Akhter (2012) carried out a study which investigated the current practice and effects of using ER at the secondary schools in Bangladesh. The study included a survey conducted with 100 secondary English teachers about different aspects of practicing ER activity in Bangladeshi ESL classrooms. The result of the study showed that the teachers of Bangladesh had a positive attitude towards the effects of ER but the way they conduct ER classes mostly supported intensive reading.

The benefits of ER proceed indirectly. Without any conscious study of vocabulary or writing, students learn vocabulary and also learn to write better. The most significant effect of ER is it increases learners' motivation to read In English (Day, et al., 2013).

## **2.5 Materials of Extensive Reading**

According to Day (2013), the materials of ER can be any text that is written in simple language and ensure students' overall comprehension. Based on the learners' ability in the target language, they need to provide with a wide range of interesting materials as learners' taste of reading can vary. He noted that the library of ER materials should be categorized into several sections so that learners can find materials easily according to their tastes. Day et al. (2013) addressed that "language learner literature" is considered as the suitable materials for beginning and intermediate level learners. However, a wide range of books, magazines and newspaper are also available for the English language learners. He emphasised that ER makes a reading programme autonomous by letting the students to read according to their choice. On the other

hand, Jacobs & Farrell (2012) claimed that sometimes students may get confused in certain vocabularies or language issues but they can understand those with the help of context, pictures and appropriate guesses. Students below grade level may face difficulty in finding materials for their own. In that case, they may provide with “babies” books but it can make them feel embarrassed and they may reject to read those books. Richard and Renandya (2002) noted that the materials of ER should be near or below the comprehensible level of the students. In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), students should be provided with the “i+1 or i-1” input where “i” indicates students’ current proficiency level.

Jacobs and Farrell (2012) identified four reasons about the importance of selecting materials within the learners’ “independent reading level” in their book *Teachers Sourcebook for Extensive Reading* (p.15).

1. Learners’ may develop their confidence level especially less proficient learners if the materials are in easy language as they lack confidence regarding their ability to read.
2. Learners can focus on the summary, grammar or content of the materials if they can understand the materials without any difficulty.
3. Different activities can be added if the materials are easy to read. Jacobs and Farrell (2012) encouraged teachers to introduce activities like class discussion where learners can share their reading experience with their classmates.
4. If the learners are familiarized with their appropriate level of books, they will be introduced with proper grammar, vocabulary, context and literary aspects such as “metaphor or flashback” according to their level.

Now a day, materials of ER are also available with audiotapes. Extensive reading foundation (2011) addressed that the audio of the books are possible to download from the publishers' website or can also be purchased. Students can listen to the recordings at the time of reading to enjoy it. Additionally, the recordings help learners to recognize sound patterns as well as pronunciation. Jacobs and Farrell (2012) noted that some electronics listening tapes involves musical songs whose lyrics are available in the internet. An example is used in the book *Teachers Sourcebook for Extensive reading* where the teacher used the song of Jim Croce, *Working at the car Wash Blues* in his class. He provided students with the lyrics of the songs so that students could read or sing with the music. As a post activity, students were asked to imagine about the characters of the person in the song and the teacher were listed those characters on the board.

## **2.6 Graded Readers**

Graded Readers are resources containing stories in simple language. According to Waring (1998), Graded Readers contain materials which are written in easy language with simplified grammar and vocabulary so that learners can read without any difficulty. Graded Readers are also known as "simplified readers" or "Basal readers". Day (2002) emphasized that Graded Readers gives the learners an opportunity to use language in the context of communicative way in a classroom setting.

Thousands of Graded Readers are written for appropriate levels and also meet the interest of students. Stories are generally chosen from the novels, classics, TV shows or popular films of the famous writers. To the ESL learners, both global and local publishers published a greater quantity of 'language learner literature'. The oxford library and Bookworms Starters covers a wide range of topics starting from fiction to biography and from stage plays to factual

stories. These texts are written using present tense with maximum 250 headwords (Day et.al, 2013).

According to Hill (2001), learners can get pleasure from Graded Readers but it also can be a source of language teaching. He claimed that it can help learners in four ways:

### **1. Motivation**

Learning English as a second language in the class is usually boring to the students. Syllabus only emphasizes on language issues and communication rather than encouraging them to reading and telling stories. The use of Graded Readers can give learners an opportunity to learn English in an enjoyable way which gradually increases their attitudes to learn a foreign language.

### **2. Fluency**

Reading books, magazines, journals, articles are essential for both academic and professional life. This can also develop their reading skills as well as fluency in reading. Hill (2001) noted that reading a page with minimum 200 words in a minute can show learners' success on reading fluently. To develop learners' fluency, it is needed to develop the practice of reading graded reader which can provide "95% comprehension".

### **3. Direct language learning**

Graded Readers can increase the exposure to English and it gives the learners an opportunity to practice a foreign language which eventually reinforces language learning. Through the books of Graded Readers learners are not directly introduced to any language issues such as lexis, syntax but their proficiency in language increases without being conscious of it.



#### **4. Source of exposure**

Another benefit of using Graded Readers is, it increases learners' exposure to the target language within their competence level. Therefore, it becomes easy for learners to acquire the language.

Before starting to read Graded Readers Waring (n.d) mentioned that learners need to know the basic vocabularies and have the ability to understand those vocabularies in the context of books. At first, learners should start with the easiest Readers before going through the difficult ones. A number of series of Graded Readers such as *The Reading Tree* are published by Oxford University Press for helping children to start reading with the basic knowledge of vocabulary.

#### **2.7 Criticism of using Graded Readers**

The use of Graded Reader received criticism. To some teachers and experts, students are benefited if they read only authentic materials. The aim of using authentic materials is, it exposes students to the use of English in the real world outside of the classroom. However, Day et al. (2013) claimed that the issue of using authentic materials is related to reading to learn than learning to read. At first, students need to learn to read then they should read to learn the use of English in the real world. Moreover, Davis (1995) noted that the benefits of using Graded Readers do not appear immediately as it requires a very long time to make the habits of reading. He also addressed that as the materials of extensive reading requires a lot of money, the authority of school may be reluctant to set up the programme. Another bigger criticism of using Graded Readers is, it is "inefficient". Laufer (2003) argued that the numbers of vocabulary gains are very limited after reading a large amount of books in ER programme. He claimed that intensive reading is more efficient for learning new vocabularies than ER (as cited in, Brown, 2008).

## **2.8 Implementing ER into second language programme**

Students are benefitted if an ER programme is integrated into second language curriculum. Shankar (2010) addressed that ER should be integrated into second language curriculum as it enhances learners' attitude towards reading. He suggested that it will be more beneficial for students if ER will be integrated into second language curriculum through a separate course. He mentioned an alternative method to integrate ER in ESL curriculum in which certain amount of ER will be incorporated into the already existing course such as reading or writing. Moreover, teachers can give ER as homework as the class time is limited. Teachers should make the students realize about the benefits of ER and motivate them to read as an optional activity than as a formal study. Day and Bamford (1998) have indicated the following four ways by which ER can be integrated into textbooks:

### **1) As a separate course**

To organize an extensive reading approach as an independent course, it is needed to arrange separate teacher, syllabus, classroom, materials and time period just like other courses need. The duration of time can vary according to goal of the second language curriculum. As an example, Day and Bamford (1998) mentioned that the class can take 50 minutes in an entire week or 5 days in a week for 50 minutes.

### **2) As a part of an existing reading course**

A portion of extensive reading can be integrated into existing reading course. Teachers can assign students to read a number of books both in class and outside of class per month and per semester. In classroom reading slot, time should be kept aside for extensive reading activities such as group discussion on assigned books.

### **3) As a non-credit addition to an existing reading course**

Generally, learners want to read for their own pleasure than getting a good grade. Therefore, extensive reading can be introduced in current reading course as a non-credit and optional activity. There will be no marks which may affect their grade but extra credit will be given in their final mark sheet. Day and Bamford (1998) noted that it depends on teachers' attitudes that how s/he will view the extensive reading approach. Sometimes, it is seen that teachers 'firm enthusiasm and motivation on extensive reading may draw students' attention on it.

### **4) As an extracurricular activity**

Extensive reading can be added as a supplementary reading club which will not have any relation with the courses of curriculum. All the students of school can join it and the activities of the club can start after the classes will over. A teacher should be appointment as an in charge of the reading activity. The activities of the club can be held weekly or twice in a week according to the interest of the students and the teacher.

To implement ER into second language curriculum, Brown (2008) claimed that by integrating ER into textbooks, it was possible to overcome the fears which discourage many institutions and teachers from adopting it. However, textbook cannot give any support regarding cost or managing variety of books for library but it can assist with some other concerns. He identified certain issues which are possible to reduce to some extent if ER is incorporated into textbooks (p. 240).

#### **1. Lack of time**

2. Monitoring students' reading
3. Guiding students to choose appropriate books
4. Getting students engaged in reading as an activity

Brown (2008) mentioned some ways by which textbooks could directly encourage students' to start reading. These are:

1. Textbooks can include reading logs to give an additional support to students' reading. Through using these logs, they can record their reading history such as titles, pages etc.
2. A flowchart can be added in the textbooks which will lead students' to make their book choice. Flowchart can include some chosen genres, titles, settings, and ages of characters in a form of flowchart.
3. At the end of the each unit of the textbooks, a Graded Readers related to the topics of the unit can be included to encourage students' reading. Moreover, two readers can also be given so that students' can make their own choice of reading.
4. Activities related to the unit of textbooks can also recommend reading Graded Readers. Brown (2008) used an example where students finished a chapter on different characters of people. After that, students' will find out the most interesting characters and read about it from Graded Readers as an activity to describe about the main character.
5. A quotation from Graded Readers can be added in the first chapter of the textbooks in order to get students' involved into the story of the unit.
6. Similarly, each unit of the textbook can contain extracts from Graded Readers so that students can get a taste of extensive reading throughout the book.
7. Each unit of the textbook can include activities which will allow learners to discuss their reading. In this matter, activities should be set in a way that students of the class can do

the same activities though each of them read different books. Therefore, through these activities students' can get an opportunity to discuss their reading and can find different titles and genres from which they can get interest.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Methodology**

This chapter presents an overview of the research methodology. It is discussed about the nature of the research, participants, instruments, techniques and also the data collection procedure.

#### **3.1 Research design**

Brown (1988) categorized research into two approaches: 1) primary research and 2) secondary research. This research is considered as primary research because it is derived from the primary sources of information. According to Tavakoli (2013), researchers in primary research receive original data to find out research objective. In this research, classroom observations and interviews were the primary data to identify the practice of extensive reading in our country.

Among the two types of research methods, qualitative and quantitative, the researcher applied qualitative method in this research. Qualitative research is a naturalistic approach which uses practical information such as case study, interview, observation and personal understanding in order to interpret in-depth picture of a specific phenomenon. It does not minimise the responses of the participants through a set of predetermined questions and gives the researcher a chance to explore the study (Thomas, 2013).

#### **3.2 Participants**

For classroom observation, the researcher observed five classes in three different schools of Bangladesh. One of them was in Dhaka city and rests two of them were located in Saidpur.

The researcher observed two classes from one school and other three classes from another two schools. The curriculum of all the schools were English version under NCTB and the researcher chose to observe classes of primary level students (from I-IV). All the classes followed extensive reading approach as a part of English second language programme. The level of class was suitable for study as the students of class five and eight were busier with their board exams. Table 1 lists the total numbers and the average ages of the students of the classes.

**Table 1. Class Profile of the participants**

<b>Level of class</b>	<b>Number of the students</b>	<b>Average age of the students</b>
I	20	7-8
II	25	9-10
II	20	9-10
III	30	11-12
IV	35	13-14

In addition, the interviews of the five teachers who taught the classes that the researcher observed were conducted to get their opinion and suggestion about the implementation of ER in ESL classrooms.

### **3.3 Research Instruments**

For the observation procedure, the researcher used a check list (Appendix A) consisted of the ten principles of ER which are discussed in the literature review section. Through the check list, the researchers identified to what extent the principles of ER are practiced in the classrooms

of Bangladesh. Moreover, the researcher also administered a set of interview questions (Appendix B) for the teachers. The questions consisted of seven questions which were related to the central focus of the research and all the questions were open ended so that teachers could give their opinion and suggestion regarding ER programme.

### **3.4 Data Collection procedure**

For the research, direct observation method is useful to know how English teachers are taking ER classes. The data through observation process was collected from English version schools in Bangladesh. The researcher contacted with three English version schools under NCTB curriculum for the data collection procedure. The permission of the authority was obtained before the data collection process started. To observe the ER classes, the Principal of schools gave the researcher a fixed schedule. The researcher attended all the classes in the specific time period.

In the case of conducting interview of the teachers, the researcher contacted with the teachers who would take the extensive reading classes. The interviews were conducted before or after the classes. Sometimes it was difficult to get the teachers' time as they were busy with their works. However, they gave enough time to the researcher for giving the answers of the interview questions.

### **3.5 Data Analysis procedures**

For the data analysis of the research study, the researcher used qualitative method. The checklist of the classroom observation related to the extensive reading principles were analysed in details. Additionally, all the interviews of the teachers were evaluated and analysed to convey the qualitative result in detail.



### **3.6 Obstacles in collecting data**

Obstacles were encountered in finding extensive reading classes in schools. Some years ago a series of English book named “Rapid Reader” was allocated for graded six, seven and eight to introduce extensive reading to Bangladeshi learners. However, NCTB changed the curriculum and implemented a new syllabus from 2012. Therefore, the researcher had to search a lot of schools for finding extensive reading classes. Accessing the schools was a problem as well as the school authority and teachers were not acquainted with the researcher. Other obstacles that hindered the observation process were, school exams and Eid-Ul -Azha’s holidays which is why it took really long to get permission from the Principals for classroom observation as well as interviews.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

The chapter is designed to analyse the findings of the research. The data were collected through the observation of some classes and the interview of the teachers.

#### **4.1 Findings from Classroom observation**

For classroom observation, the researcher chose to observe junior classes from I- IV. At first, the researcher observed class I and II at Saidpur. Then, the researcher went to another school, and observed class II. These were followed by class observation in a school in Dhaka for classes III and IV. During the period of observation, the researcher noted down some important points and they are as follows:

##### **4.1.1 Selection of materials**

In an ER programme, students usually select their own materials. This practice is essential to make students interested about ER (Day, 2003). However, in each class that was observed, the teachers chose stories from the selected materials for the students and questions of the exams would set from only those stories. The students were not encouraged to read a vast amount of books from different genres. Also they did not have any opportunity to choose their own reading materials.

##### **4.1.2 Language of the text**

The language of the books used in the classes were seemed difficult and challenging to many students. They faced difficulties in pronouncing some words when the teacher asked them

to read aloud. Even in one class, the teacher had to read out the whole story because no one could be able to read it by their own. This shows that reading materials were not comprehensible to the students. In every class it was observed that the teachers emphasised on details of the texts and tried to explain each and every unknown word that came across in reading.

#### **4.1.3 Method of reading**

In the class, the teachers frequently asked the students one by one to read out the story though silent reading is important for a successful ER approach. However, ER allows teachers to read aloud some portion of the story to increase the students' motivation in reading (Richard & Renandya, 2002). In the class, the teachers read out the stories only when the students did mistakes in reading and occasionally read aloud some interesting parts of the story.

#### **4.1.4 Purpose of reading**

In the class, the teachers pushed the students to read in the class as they did not do any reading at their home. When the teachers realized that the students were very reluctant to read, they often reminded them to be careful in reading as the questions would come in their exam on the basis of their reading. Since the students missed the environment to enjoy reading, they usually read for passing examinations.

#### **4.1.5 Post reading activities**

In the classes, the teachers emphasized on the questions that would come in the exams from the 'Graded Readers' rather than focusing in any follow up activities that would sustain the interest of the learners. Usually the teachers set typical reading questions in the exams such as comprehension questions, definition of vocabulary, and summary writing. The teachers did not

ask the students to share their favorite quotations in the class or encouraged them to record their reactions after they read a story.

#### **4.1.6 Teachers' role**

In the classes, before starting to discuss a story, the teachers usually asked the students to read it at their home. In class time, they only explained main parts of the story from which questions might come in their exams. Sometimes the teachers read out some parts of stories when they realized the students were facing difficulties in reading but they did not encourage the students to increase their level of motivation in reading. Moreover, the teachers emphasised on the details information of the stories which even decrease the students' interest in reading.

#### **4.2 The teachers' responses based on the research questions (interview responses)**

First question of the interview with the five teachers from three different institutions revealed that all the teachers were considered ER as an effective method to increase the students' reading practice. One of them commented that the students should read additional English textbooks in order to develop their reading skills as well as reading habits. Moreover, a teacher mentioned that "students need to read ER to broaden their knowledge". He noted that the main textbook "English For Today" provided the students with very limited syllabus but it was possible to introduce learners with variety of subjects and topics through the books of ER. In addition, a teacher reported that the learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge were also developed through reading books. Regarding the improvement in writing skills, the teachers claimed that only reading activity could not develop the students' writing ability. However, all the teachers claimed that most of the students read Graded Readers for passing the

exams. Only two of them mentioned that some of their students who already had a habit of reading story books were motivated to read to get pleasure.

In response to the second question of the interview, the teachers stated that they selected the stories for the students to read from a selected book. The students did not have any opportunity to read their own choice of books. The teachers were also reported that majority of the students were not self motivated to read by their own. The students considered ER as an extra task rather than finding pleasure from it. Therefore, the teachers needed to select the materials for the students. On the other hand, one teacher mentioned that school library contained a very limited number of books so it became difficult for the teachers to motivate the students' towards reading.

In response to the third interview question, the teachers revealed that students were usually assigned to do comprehension questions after reading a text. The books of Graded Readers contained a set of exercises such as comprehension questions, vocabulary meaning tests, sentence writing from the given vocabulary, multiple choices etc. at the end of each text. The teachers asked their students to complete those tasks and they often set questions in the exams from the exercises of the books. Two of the teachers mentioned that they also asked the students to write summary of the stories they had already read. Only one teacher reported that he often assigned students with interesting tasks such as role play. He gave the students the role of the characters from the story and asked them to play the roles by putting themselves in the characters' place.

While answering the fourth question, the teachers addressed that they assigned the students to read stories as home work at first and then they discussed it in class. Two of the

teachers believed that if they would tell the story in class before starting to read, students would be motivated to read. In class, the teachers also asked the students to read aloud as they thought it would improve the students' pronunciations as well as reading speed. A teacher stated that he often asked students one by one to read out a story in front of the whole class so that he could identify their problems regarding pronunciations and sort it out. The teachers also expressed that if all the students would read aloud the same story one by one, they would be more attentive to listen as everyone was engaged in an activity. Another teacher noted that most of the students did not want to read at their home as they enjoyed their free time with electronic technologies such as mobile phone , tap etc.

To answer the question number five, the teachers illustrated that they provided the students with necessary help while they encountered with any difficulty in reading. Though sometimes the students were assigned to finish reading at their home, the teachers explained the summary of the story in the classes. Two teachers stated that sometimes they read the whole story and asked the students to listen to them if the story seemed too complex for the students. Moreover, the majority of the students did not read the stories at their home so they faced problems when they were assigned to do any activity based on reading. In that situation, the teachers explained the details of the story as well as the main theme. In addition, while the students were reading aloud the stories in class and faced difficulties in pronouncing some words, the teachers assisted them by correcting their mistake with the proper explanation. A teacher mentioned that he used to explain the difference between the words whose pronunciation was similar such as the difference between man and men.

The question number six from the interview describes certain difficulties that the students face in an ER program. The teachers pointed out that excessive exams pressure made

the students reluctant to read the ER reading books. As the students were worried to passing exams, most of them could not complete reading all the stories. Moreover, the teachers also claimed that the students took too many time to read a single story as the language of the ER materials were difficult for them. A teacher illustrated that most of the students focused on the details of the story in order to obtain good marks in the exams therefore they could not get time to finish reading all the stories. Another teacher mentioned that the students of our country were afraid to read in English. Therefore, when they realized that they had to read an additional English textbook, they took it as burden. In addition, one of the teachers noted that the students had only one class on ER in a week which was not enough to achieve the benefits of ER as it was a lengthy process. Moreover, he also claimed that sufficient reading materials were not available in the school library to motivate students to read.

Finally, the answer of the last question illustrates some suggestions of the teachers to make ER successful in Bangladesh. A teacher addressed that the government should include ER in the second language curriculum as a compulsory course to make the programme successful. In addition, the respondents believed that setting up mini libraries with variety of books was necessary for the implementation of ER successfully. In this purpose, funding should be raised from the school management committee along with the government. A few teachers reported that training was necessary to make the teachers' aware about the techniques of ER programme. The teachers also noted that the parents should motivate the students' to read for pleasure rather than reading to achieve only good grade. Furthermore, a teacher mentioned that in order to motivate the students' towards ER program, short play from the stories of the Graded Readers could be arranged in which the students' would play the roles of the characters. In this regards, sufficient funding was necessary to buy the essential instruments and costumes for the programme.

Another technique noted by a teacher to motivate learners' to read was showing the available videos of the stories they would read.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The three research questions were included in this study to explore the current practice of ER in the primary level of the Bangladeshi classrooms. The major findings through classroom observations and interpretations of each teacher's point of view are explored in this section.

#### **5.1 Discussion on the first research question**

The aim of the first research question is to investigate to what extent the principles of ER are implemented in the classrooms of Bangladesh. From the data of classroom observations, the researcher found that some schools of Bangladesh have practiced ER still now but they do not follow the actual method and nature of ER. It is identified that most of the students in the class read ER materials to pass the exams. In the class, the teachers emphasized the details of a story especially the areas from which questions might come in their exams. This limited the care-free environment in which the students could read to get pleasure. Moreover, it also made the students reluctant to read therefore the teachers needed to push them to read. Haider and Akter (2012) pointed out that students had a significant problem with their attitude toward extensive reading. The schools usually set exam questions from the ER textbooks to examine the students' reading of the 'Graded Readers'. Around 10 or 15 marks were reserved for 'Graded Reader' in a 100 marks test. As the students were mostly concerned about the exams, they were more likely to read for passing exams rather than getting pleasure from the books of ER.

The principles of ER encourage students to choose their own reading materials. However, the findings from the classroom observations revealed that all the stories were selected

by the teachers. This practice hinders the success of ER programme as the principle of “self-selection” is a basic concept of ER approach (Day et al, 2013). The interpretation of the teachers in this purpose illustrated that they had to select the materials for the class because the students considered ER as an additional activity. They noted that without the presence of interesting materials, it was difficult to change the attitude of the students toward ER. In this regards, different kinds of texts such as short stories, novels, magazines should be available to attract the students’ attention towards reading.

Another principle of ER is, the language of the materials should be comprehensible (Bamford & Day, 2004). However, the materials of the language used in the class were beyond the appropriate level of the students. Many students in the class faced difficulties while reading out the story. On the other hand, the teachers emphasised every detail of the texts such as meaning of all the possible difficult words, explanation of important quotes and pronunciation of the words. From the interview data, it was identified that sometimes the teachers explained the grammatical difference of two words while discussing of the story. Therefore, the students took too much time on reading a story as they did not read within their comfort zone and focused on details while reading. In this regard, the principle of ER reminds us that students will only focus on overall meaning of the text at the time of reading and they do not need to concern about a lot of difficult words. One or two unknown words per page can make the texts too complex for the beginner level students (Day, et al, 2013). Moreover, Haider and Akter (2012) also noted that the principles of ER suggest readers to stop reading if they find the materials too difficult. As the students of the Bangladeshi schools are not introduced with the easy materials, they cannot complete reading all the stories. Therefore, the teachers select a limited numbers of stories from a selected book and students read only those stories to pass their exams. This practice is not

supported the ER approach which encourages learners to read a large number of books on a variety of topics. This is because sufficient materials are not available in the school libraries. Therefore, the students get deprived of reading a large amount of books.

For a successful ER programme, silent reading method is usually preferred. However, it was found that most of the teachers asked the students to read aloud the stories in classroom environment. The teachers believed that it was possible to improve the students' pronunciation through reading aloud. Moreover, they used this activity in class to grab the attention of the less motivated learners. The teachers noted in the interviews that nowadays the students were more attached to technology such as face booking and online games that it became difficult to sustain the students' reading habits. Therefore, the students did not do any reading task at their home. That is why the teachers were instructed the students' to read loudly in the class in order to develop their reading habit. Though the approach of ER allows learners to read most of the reading at their home, students' were so concerned about the reading assignments and exams that they failed to give time in reading.

One of the principles of ER emphasises on setting interesting post reading activities which will sustain students' interest. However, it was observed that most of the teachers set typical comprehension questions as the follow up reading activities. From the interview data, it was also identified that the teachers were more familiar with comprehension questions which would come in the school examinations. This kind of practice diminishes students' motivation to read. Interesting follow up activities are essential in an ER programme to motivate students' to read, to identify students' experiences of reading, to record students' reading progress (Day & Bamford, 2004). Moreover, Richards and Renandya (2002) claimed that summary writing or writing book review is a time consuming task. Therefore, he addressed some activities such as

role play, design posters to advertise books, copy interesting expressions into diary, discussion about the books with the classmates which students may ask to do in class.

Teacher's guidance is a required aspect in an ER program. From the observation, the researcher identified that the pressure of completing the syllabus could not let the teachers guide the students on how to finish most of their reading. However, a few teachers often read some parts of the story in class. In this regard, the approach of ER expresses that teachers can play a powerful role model by reading the story with the students (Day, 2013). The data of the interview revealed that the teachers read out the stories most often when the students faced difficulties in reading or understanding it or when the stories seemed too difficult for the students. However, the principle of ER encourages the teachers to read out the stories with the students in order to experience the pleasure of the written words collectively (Day, 2004). Moreover, the teachers can also recommend the students to read the books they have already read but this practice is very rare in the context of primary classes in Bangladesh.

## **5.2 Discussion on the second research question**

The second research question is based on the teachers' attitude towards ER. The teachers considered ER as an effective method to develop the students' English proficiency. Through the method of classroom observation, it was identified that the students were too concerned to pronounce the sentences of the story correctly. The interview data also revealed that the teachers emphasised more on pronunciation and correct the students' pronunciation problem if they did any mistake. Therefore, the students' pronunciation skill enhanced gradually through reading a lot of books. In this regard, Day et al. (2013) mentioned that ER makes the learners better speakers of English. Moreover, the teachers believed that it enriched the students' knowledge if

they would read a variety of books. Through the books of ER, the students get to know different kinds of information such as cultural diversity, moral facts and historical facts. The teachers also reported that the students' reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge had developed to certain extent through ER books. As the students were given the opportunity to read additional textbooks, it expanded their reading ability and made them active readers. Day (2013) stated that the ER approach makes the students good readers along with developing their reading strategies. The teachers believed that if the students read a large amount of books, they would come across same vocabulary again and again. Therefore, a noticeable effect had been identified in vocabulary learning. Regarding the reading speed, it was seen that majority of the students' in the classes were slow learners. As the teachers interrupted the students at the time of reading aloud to correct their mistake, the fluency in reading was hampered. Day and Bamford (2004) addressed that any kinds of interruptions such as using dictionaries or guessing the meaning of unknown words need to be avoided at the time of reading. Moreover, the teachers also noted that there was no noticeable effect on the students' writing skills. The students who were already good readers might develop their writing ability to some extent but majority of the students' learned how to read through ER books. Therefore, the improvement in reading ability and learning vocabulary were more visible than the other benefits of ER. However, the teachers hoped that the students would be able to achieve all the benefits of ER if they would make habit of reading.

### **5.3 Discussion on the third research question**

The third research question of the study investigates the difficulties of the teachers to implement ER in the classrooms of Bangladesh. The teachers mentioned that excessive pressure of completing the syllabus for exams discouraged them to include ER method into the regular

curriculum. In this regard, Richard and Renandya (2002) stated that the teachers often cannot manage time to read students' extensively as the administration emphasizes more to finish specific syllabus. Moreover, the demand of good grades from the guardians and the school authorities minimize the care-free environment. In our country, teachers and students remain so busy with the assignments, preparation of exams by practicing lots of exercise that they cannot spend time on ER. Therefore, majority of the teachers have to take one class of ER in a week which is not enough to achieve the benefits of ER. The teachers addressed that the effects of ER would not be visible too early as its evaluation was a lengthy process. Moreover, the students were more likely to enjoy their pass time through using internet rather than reading books. That is why it became challenging for the teachers to develop the student's reading habit. In addition, the teachers noted that the materials available for ER program were not interesting enough to motivate the students' reading progress. In this situation, they suggested that sufficient funding was essential to provide the students' with a variety of materials according to their appropriate level. A wide range of topics could motivate the students' to change their attitude towards ER.

The teachers provided certain suggestions to overcome the problems they faced to conduct ER classes. At first, they suggested that the school management committee along with the help of the government should raise funds for the ER program. Moreover, the NCTB needed to include ER programme in the syllabus of the primary and secondary level with proper details of its implementation. If the government made the ER programme as a compulsory course, it would be easy for the teachers to conduct the programme successfully. Secondly, the teachers suggested that the establishment of school library was essential to supply the students' with their favorite books. If the students would provide with the books of their interest, they would be more likely to read. Rodrigo et al. (2007) suggested that to provide students' with variety of topics,

teachers and school authorities need to understand the interest of the target audience. They should also keep in mind the other factors of class such as age, gender and language. However, in this purpose, the school authority needs to give the permission to set up school library and proper budget should be made to implement it. Thirdly, some teachers suggested that professional training on ER should be arranged to make all the teachers of Bangladesh aware of the purpose, benefits and techniques of conducting ER program. In this regard, Haider and Akhter (2012) stated that trainings to educate teachers' to manage ER programmes and workshops to raise awareness among the guardians need to be set up. In an ER programme, teachers play as a powerful role model who can encourage readers to read for pleasure instead of passing exams. The teachers also mentioned that the parents should be careful to develop the students' reading habits. They noted that most of the parents viewed reading stories from additional textbook as a waste of time. If the parents changed their attitudes towards ER and encouraged their children to develop their reading practice, the implementation of a successful ER programme would be easy. Furthermore, the teachers suggested some classroom strategies to motivate the students' towards ER programme. They recommended that sometimes the schools could arrange short plays from the interesting stories of Graded Readers in which the students would participate by performing the roles of the characters. Moreover, the movies from the stories they read could also be shown to the students in order to encourage the unmotivated readers.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper is to explore the present practice of ER in the primary level of Bangladeshi classrooms. It is investigated how the approach of ER is conducted in the classes, the difficulties of its implementations and possible suggestions to make this programme effective.

The data obtained from the research highlights the practice of ER in the context of Bangladesh. The researcher found that though some English version schools under NCTB include ER in their curriculum, the principles of ER were not implemented properly. The teachers expressed positive attitudes towards ER but they did not follow the principles of ER properly. Moreover, the pressure of exams and class assignments did not give the students and the teachers enough time to concentrate on reading activity. Additionally, the teachers found certain obstacles which hindered them to implement ER programme successfully.

The implication of successful ER programme requires the teachers' support and their positive attitude towards reading. The teachers have a role to play in increasing students' proficiency in English and making them fluent readers through the ER programme. If the teachers hold a positive belief towards reading extensively, they can easily take necessary steps to integrate ER in the second language curriculum. From the research, it was identified that sufficient reading materials, libraries, skilled teachers were necessary elements to implement the ER programme successfully. By taking these elements under consideration while implementing ER, the learners could be benefited. In addition, schools authorities, the education board as well as the government need to take a step to implement ER approach in classrooms.



The researcher suggested that it was necessary to educate the teachers with the techniques of ER to implement a successful ER programme. The students would be motivated to read if the teachers conducted the classes based on the principles of ER. Moreover, awareness should be raised among the parents as the goal of ER would not be achieved without the encouragement of the parents.

The researcher also recommended that ER activities should be incorporated in the curriculum of English language in our country. In this regard, collaboration among the teachers, education board, government, school authority was essential to implement ER in teaching and learning process. Moreover, the courses involving ER and its evaluation process should be designed with proper explanations to deal with it in classroom environment.

Another suggestion to implement ER was, teachers could suggest students to read stories via online if the school libraries did not contain a variety of materials. As learners were more attracted to pass their free time by using internet now days, teachers could encourage them to read different stories through online. In this purpose, internet should be made available in the school campus.

Due to time constraint, the data collection was confined to only three schools in Bangladesh. As the Bengali medium schools of Bangladesh do not have any syllabus of ER currently, the researcher had to collect data from only primary classes (I-IV) of English version schools under the curriculum of NCTB. In addition, the teachers did not give enough time as they were busy with their classes and exams. If these constrictions were not there, the research could be better. The researcher recommends that future studies could include larger samples from both Bengali and English medium schools in all the districts of Bangladesh. The

researchers could also explore the difference between urban and rural areas by observing the teaching and learning process of ER classes in these contexts. It could explore an encouraging picture of using ER in the context of Bangladesh.

To conclude, it is important to note that in order to receive the benefits of ER, it is necessary to implement the principles of ER successfully. The obstacles regarding the implementation will be overcome if the teachers as well as the education board concentrate on ER as an effective method of teaching English.

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**Appendix A- Classroom Observation checklist**

School name: .....

Subject: .....

Date: .....

Principles of extensive reading	Comment
<p>1. Do the students choose their own materials?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p> <p>2. Do the teachers encourage the students to read a large number of books?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p> <p>3. Are the materials comprehensible?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p> <p>4. Do the books they read contain a variety of topics?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p> <p>5. Do the students read faster than normal speed?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p> <p>6. Does the purpose of reading is getting pleasure, information and general understanding?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p>	

<p>7. Are there any post reading activities?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p> <p>8. Do they read out the ER books?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p> <p>9. Do the teachers guide the students in their reading?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p> <p>10. Do the teachers play as a role model?</p> <p>I) Yes      II) No</p>	
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**Appendix B- Interview questions**

Interviewee: .....

School: .....

Date: .....

Time duration: .....

**Topic: How the teachers implement extensive reading in ESL classrooms**

1. Why do you think the students should read the Graded Readers?
2. Who choose the materials for extensive reading classes?
3. What kind of activities do you set after reading a text?
4. How do you teach the students to read ER books?
5. Do you help them in reading? How do you guide them when they encounter any difficulty?
6. What kind of difficulties do you face while implementing extensive reading programme?
7. What are your suggestions to make extensive reading successful in Bangladesh?